

1-1994

Meeting customer expectations in the foodservice industry: A "Mystery Diner" program

Michele L. Bailey

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses>

Recommended Citation

Bailey, Michele L., "Meeting customer expectations in the foodservice industry: A "Mystery Diner" program" (1994). Thesis. Rochester Institute of Technology. Accessed from

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Thesis/Dissertation Collections at RIT Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of RIT Scholar Works. For more information, please contact ritscholarworks@rit.edu.

MEETING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS IN THE FOODSERVICE

INDUSTRY: A "MYSTERY DINER" PROGRAM

By

Michele L. Bailey

**A thesis submitted to the faculty of the
School of Food, Hotel and Travel Management**

at

**Rochester Institute of Technology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Science

January 1994

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
School of Food, Hotel and Travel Management
Department of Graduate Studies

M.S. Hospitality-Tourism Management
Presentation of Thesis/Project Findings

Name: Michele Bailey Date: 1/31/94 SS#: _____

Title of Research: Meeting Customer Expectations in the Foodservice

Industry: A "Mystery Diner" Program

Specific Recommendations: (Use other side if necessary.)

Thesis Committee: (1) Dr. Richard F. Marecki (Chairperson)

(2) Dr. Carol Whitlock

OR (3) _____

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Richard F. Marecki

Number of Credits Approved: 09 Credits

7/31/94 Richard F. Marecki

Date Committee Chairperson's Signature

7/31/94 Richard F. Marecki

Date Department Chairperson's Signature

Note: This form will not be signed by the Department Chairperson until all corrections, as suggested in the specific recommendations (above) are completed.

cc: Departmental Student Record File - Original
Student

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
School of Food, Hotel and Travel Management
Department of Graduate Studies

M.S. Hospitality-Tourism Management
Statement Granting or Denying Permission to Reproduce Thesis/Project

The author of a thesis or project should complete one of the following statements and include this statement as the page following the title page.

Title of thesis/project: Meeting Customer Expectations in the Foodservice Industry:

A "Mystery Diner" Program

I, Michele Bailey, hereby (grant, ~~deny~~) permission to the
Wallace Memorial Library of R.I.T., to reproduce the document titled above in
whole or part. Any reproduction will not be for commercial use or profit.

OR

I, _____, prefer to be contacted each time a
request for reproduction is made. I can be reached at the following address:

11/31/94
Date

Michele Bailey
Signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Carol Whitlock, Dr. Richard Marecki, and Maria Aglietti for all their assistance and guidance in carrying out this research endeavor. A special thanks, also, to my family for their continuous encouragement and especially to Jim for all his love and support during the "difficult" phases.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Figures	vi
List of Table	vii
Chapter I: INTRODUCTION	1
Problem	4
Purpose	4
Significance	5
Assumptions	8
Scope & Limitations	8
Definition of Terms	10
Chapter II: LITERATURE REVIEW	
Total Quality Service Management	14
Cycles of Service	15
Service Quality Measurement	16
Mystery Shopping	17
Consumer Expectations & Perceptions	18
SERVQUAL	21
Service Benchmarking	24
Focus Groups	25

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Employee Service Training	26
Quality Satisfaction Variables in the Foodservice Industry: Key Consumer Expectation & Perception Variables	27
Site Selection Variables	30
Quality Control Variables	30
Dining Room Service Rules & Etiquette	32
 Chapter III: METHODOLOGY	
Methodology & Research Design	33
Holistic Overview of the Quality Service Program	33
Thesis Overview	34
Development of Mystery Diner Tool	34
Instrument Character	34
Research Basis	35
Construct & Design/Modification/ Approval	36

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Categories & Point Allocation	37
Overview	37
Breakdown	40
Sample Population	42
Surveying Procedure	42
 Chapter VI: DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS	
Results & Discussion	44
Data Analysis	46
 Chapter V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	
Summary	57
Conclusions	62
Implications for Further Research	63
Works Consulted	97
 Appendices:	
A. Quality Variables & Sample Comment	
Cards	66
B. Dining Room Service Rules	
& Etiquette	82
C. Mystery Diner Evaluation Form	89

LIST OF FIGURES

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 1: Holistic Overview of Quality	
Service Program	33
Figure 2: Mystery Diner Evaluation	
Form Breakdown	40

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
Table 1: Restaurant Society Composite Scores	34
Table 2: Outside Aesthetics	50
Table 3: Host	51
Table 4: Atmosphere	52
Table 5: Place Setting	53
Table 6: Menu	54
Table 7: Service	55
Table 8: Food	56

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At some point in time, almost everyone has had a less than satisfactory experience while dining out. Regardless of the type of dining establishment a consumer decides to frequent - be it ethnic, casual-theme, fast-food, family-style, etc.. - they automatically (and, perhaps, unconsciously) expect the food to be wholesome and prepared in the manner specified by the menu, server, or themselves. The consumer, generally, desires some range of menu items from which they may choose and expects the food items to taste and look appetizing. Consumers also have the expectation that the service/food received is worth the money paid for it; that is, there is an equitable cost:value relationship inherent to the obtained product/service.

The customer has the right to expect that they will be served in an efficient, prompt, friendly, and professional manner - with overall consideration being given to their safety and comfort. The degree to which the consumer anticipates these service traits may vary from one type/style of dining establishment to another, and perhaps even proportionately to the amount of money paid for the experience.

Consumer expectations and perceptions of what is or is not acceptable regarding ambience, speed/pace of service, cost:value relationship, and menu

selection definitely vary from one style of dining establishment to another. For example, a dining experience that may be considered acceptable/desirable at a fast-food establishment would be deemed wholly inappropriate/undesirable at a fine dining, full service restaurant. This example also infers that consumer expectations rise as price and/or the quality reputation of a restaurant increases.

Expectations are a powerful force and, if not met, can result in disappointment for the customer and subsequent loss of business for the restaurateur. Sometimes the customer does not even realize exactly what it was about the dining experience that was not as anticipated. But, whatever it was, it may cause customers to not return to that particular dining establishment or even to tell a friend about the disappointing experience - who tells a friend, who tells a friend....

Needless to say, restaurant owners/operators are very interested in exactly which key attributes of the dining experience were/were not fulfilled in the eyes of the diner. The restaurateur has a vested interest in meeting and/or exceeding customer expectations. And, because of that, they need to employ certain mechanisms which help them identify the strengths and weaknesses of their service delivery system. The following study illustrates a mid-sized, fine-dining restaurant society, in western New York state, that is doing just that.

Words like Total Quality Service (TQS), customer expectations, dining

experience, and value are used liberally in the hospitality industry today. The reason for this is that professionals in the hospitality business are coming to realize just how important the combination of tangible and intangible factors is to their business (Heskett et al., 1990; Albrecht & Bradford, 1990; Senge, 1990) and the imminent need to measure and act upon these features.

The restaurant society being studied in this research project is composed of a group of seven, independently owned and operated, restaurants. The common bond amongst these properties is the historical significance and beauty which they each possess - and for which the society has joined together to preserve and promote.

In the day and age of large hospitality conglomerates and restaurant franchises, the independent restaurant owner must have a means to ensure its competitive leverage and increase its buying power. By forming a consensual society, to share the expense of advertising and promotion endeavors and reap the benefits afforded to a "restaurant group", these independent properties are maintaining their competitive edge. In "joining forces" they are also mutually benefitting from the professional experiences, opinions, and advice of their society peers.

The society recognizes the importance of meeting and/or exceeding customer expectations and the restaurateurs have reached a point in their operating evolution where they must step back from the day-to-day issues and details that engross them

and examine how they are performing in the eyes of their customer. Perhaps, a more pervasive question is, "how are the restaurants meeting customer expectations as a group?"

Problem

How does a restaurant/restaurant society identify the quality attributes of the dining experience it offers and measure its performance in these key areas, so as to better meet and/or exceed customer dining expectations?

Purpose

Numerous objectives existed for this research endeavor. The primary goal was to develop a standardized service evaluation form, specifically designed for the restaurant industry. The form was filled out by a Mystery Diner, who rated the member restaurants of the society on specific performance categories (contained in the text of the evaluation form) that directly related to the customer quality dining experience. The purpose of the evaluation form was to alert the properties to the specific areas in which they were performing well, and to those that needed improvement. The Mystery Diner Evaluation form, requisitely, needed the ability to indicate the degree to which all of the properties were operating under the same service/quality standards [which affect the overall image and market position of the

restaurant society (Knutson et al., 1992)] in the final composite scoring analysis.

The second aim of the Mystery Diner Evaluation was to heighten the awareness of the owners/operators and employees of the dining establishments, as to all the factors which may influence the customer dining experience and price:value satisfaction (at any given time/day of the week).

Lastly, it was anticipated that the entire Mystery Diner Research Program would increase the level of customer dining satisfaction within each property and the entire restaurant society, to some degree.

Significance

A Mystery Diner methodology was utilized in this research to give the studied restaurant society and, hopefully other restauranteurs, a better understanding of the numerous factors that constitute a quality dining experience - from the consumer perspective. The study demonstrated how a Mystery Diner System can be an effective measurement and learning tool for the restaurant operator and his/her staff.

Performing a Mystery Diner Evaluation of a restaurant is not a new idea. However, the implementation of this MYSTERY DINER SYSTEM was an

innovative and evolutionary twist on an established idea.

The originality of the study may lay in two major areas. First, a detailed Mystery Diner Evaluation form was developed by combining a variety of weighted categories of quality indicators based largely on the research of Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991) - particularly referring to their SERVQUAL document. Drawn upon heavily, also, are the works of Albrecht, Bradford, Heskett, Sasser, Hart, Ciampa, and Rosander - all of whom have contributed significantly to the fields of service research, measurement, and consumer expectations and perceptions. The Mystery Diner form is a compilation of numerous quality factors from a wide spectrum of quality literature, but is very focused on the restaurant industry. This focus was achieved through integrating universally accepted rules of dining etiquette and culinary standards into the evaluation form.

Second, employee service training seminars and customer focus groups were administered for each property, individually. Employee service training seminars were held as a means of enlisting the assistance and talents of both the front and back of the house employees to better serve the customer.

Customer focus groups were held as another method (in addition to the Mystery Diner critiques) of communicating to the society restaurants the level of customer satisfaction with their performance; that is, "how well are customer

expectations being met?".

Thus, the premise of the Mystery Diner Program revolved around the idea that the more feedback and communication amongst restaurant owners, employees, and customers, the greater the chance that the Mystery Diner Program would be a success.

Assumptions

One assumption was that the restaurateurs involved in the Mystery Diner Program were committed to the delivery of quality services to their customers, and that they were willing to take the necessary steps (or undergo the suggested changes, as prescribed by the results of the initial Mystery Diner Evaluation) to ensure this high standard of service.

Another assumption was that the persons performing the Mystery Diner Evaluations put aside their personal preferences, opinions, and overall biases, so as to make the critique as objective as possible.

Scope & Limitations

For the purpose of realistic time-constraints and scholastic practicality, this research paper focused primarily on the formulation of the Mystery Diner Evaluation form; the two phases of Mystery Diner critiques; and, the analysis and implications of both evaluation findings.

The employee training sessions and the customer focus groups - which took place between the presentation of the initial phase of Mystery Diner findings and the final round of Mystery Diner Evaluations - are part of the overall service quality

program research, but are not part of this thesis. The reason for this is that the training sessions and the focus groups warrant separate theses unto themselves and are, in part, reported by Crystal (1993). However, they may also have influenced the results of the second phase of critiques, and therefore cannot be overlooked.

The Mystery Diner Evaluation form research and data collection had two primary limitations. The first was that, based on the agenda and needs of the restaurant society board, the Mystery Diner Evaluation form was not pilot tested. Instead, the evaluation form was formulated, critiqued, modified, and approved for use through a series of meetings with the restaurant society board over a three month time period.

The second limitation is inherent to the nature of Mystery Diner research. The Mystery Diner critiques were restricted to the observations and opinions of three, select, customers reporting on a total of 14 separate visits to the society properties.

Definition of Terms

Benchmarking - a data gathering and comparative analysis process in which similar and dissimilar practices (Reilly, 1992) of a competitor or "best of class" organization (that performs like functions to the researching organization) are uncovered and studied (Greenwood, 1992).

Consumer Expectations - that which "a consumer believes will occur during a service encounter (prediction) and what they want to occur (desire)." (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991). Expectations may behave as a standard against which all services/products are judged (Zeithaml, et al., 1993).

Critical Moments of Truth - those service encounters which are vital to customer satisfaction (Albrecht & Bradford, 1990).

Customer Value Package - all the tangible and intangible factors and experiences that form a consumer's perception of the value (Albrecht, 1992) and quality received from a service/product.

Cycle of Service - the "complete sequence of the moments of truth a customer experiences" in the process of getting some need/want fulfilled (Albrecht, 1992).

Fine Dining Restaurant - a full-service, refined dining establishment with prices ranging from moderately-expensive to very expensive.

Focus Group - a qualitative market research technique in which (optimally) a group of eight to ten people, sharing common dining habits, are led through a discussion of a selected topic by a facilitator (Greenbaum, 1993).

Key Service Quality Attribute - a tangible and measurable aspect of a dining establishment, as perceived by the customer (Albrecht & Bradford, 1990).

"Moments of Truth" - all the instances in which the customer comes into contact with a dining establishment and/or its representatives and forms an impression of the operation (Carlzon, 1987).

Mystery Diner - a person, unknown to the restaurant staff, who dines at the establishment and then compiles a report based on his/her experiences as a customer at that restaurant (Albrecht & Bradford, 1990).

Mystery Dining - an evaluation technique used to measure service/product quality at a given restaurant, during a specific encounter.

Paradigm - a mental frame of reference that dominates (Albrecht, 1992) the behavior and thought-processes of an individual or group of individuals.

Perceptions - what the consumer believes to have actually transpired during a dining experience/service encounter.

Qualitative Research - research that explores, in-depth, the attitudes/feelings of a small, sample population and produces findings which are not statistically definitive if applied to a larger population.

Quality - a measurement of the degree to which a service or product fulfills a need, adds value for a customer (Albrecht, 1992), or satisfies a desire.

Service - a task performed by one party for the benefit of another (Albrecht, 1992).

Service Quality - "the comparison between customer expectations and perceptions of service" (Parasuraman, et al., 1985).

Total Quality Service - a complete dedication to the customer (patrons, employees, stakeholders, and suppliers) that behaves as the single driving force in all organizational activities (Ciampa, 1992; Albrecht, 1992).

Value - the benefit perceived by the customer to have been obtained or the satisfaction received from a dining experience, in relation to the cost of the experience.

Value-Added - the extra worth/desirability given to a service/product by some form of augmentation; in this case, excellent service.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Total Quality Service Management (TQS, TOM)

Total Quality Service philosophy pervades every corner of the hospitality industry (as well as other service sectors) today. It stems from systems theory (a holistic approach to organizational operation and problem solving) and is seen as offering a strategic operating advantage to those who employ its methodology.

Ciampa (1992) describes Total Quality (TQ) three ways - by the primary principle it embodies, the results yielded from a Total Quality (TQ) program, and the tools/programs utilized in TQ. The principle is an unconditional commitment to serving the customer (Ciampa, 1992). The major benefits (results) are increased customer loyalty, decreased company response time, and a productive and enjoyable work atmosphere that fosters continuous learning and improvement (Ciampa, 1992). The tools include visionary leadership, continuous measurement of internal and external customer satisfaction and development programs, traditional quality control/assurance mechanisms, and Just-In-Time management techniques (Ciampa, 1992).

In short, TQS is a paradigm which involves complete organizational centering around customer needs and wants (Albrecht, 1992). Everything a company does should revolve around creating a superior and beneficial Customer Value Package for the consumer (Albrecht, 1992).

One of the key elements of any TQ program is the on-going measurement (SQMS - service quality measurement system) of customer (both internal and external) satisfaction to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organization service delivery format (Albrecht, 1988). Constant and accurate measurement of these satisfaction factors forces a company to relinquish its assumptions of what their customers want and to deal with the actual consumer need/want set (Albrecht, 1988).

Cycles of Service

Jan Carlzon (1987) proposed in his autobiography that service encounters between the customer and a service provider are actually perceived as "moments of truth" in the eyes of the customer. Albrecht & Bradford (1990) take this concept even further and pose that an entire service encounter/transaction (such as a dining experience) is actually composed of numerous moments of truth - or, a Cycle of Service.

Expanding on this idea, Albrecht & Bradford (1990) continue to posit that within the blur of dozens of moments of truth, exist select moments which are critical to overall customer satisfaction (that is, critical moments of truth) with a service/product.

Service Quality Measurement

An SQMS (service quality measurement system) is the vital link between the customer and the company - it completes the information feedback loop (Albrecht, 1988; Heskett, Sasser, & Hart, 1990). Customer needs/wants do not necessarily remain constant and so a company's services should change in response to these requisite shifts. The ability to stay abreast of these changes necessitates constant service monitoring, on the part of the organization (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991).

Measurement must be institutionalized by an organization to be truly effective. Once viable standards have been established and communicated, actual performance must be measured. Only by monitoring these services and processes can one know if introduced changes and daily performance levels are effective and meeting stated objectives (Richardson, 1992).

A variety of ways exist in which a business can monitor the quality of services it provides its customers. They include one-on-one interviews, focus groups,

comment cards, questionnaires, suggestion boxes, benchmarking, watching and listening, and mystery shopper evaluations (Albrecht, 1988; Albrecht, 1990; Greenwood, 1992; Rosander, 1985; Greenbaum, 1993). Many of these methods can be administered to both internal and external customers.

Mystery Shopping

Mystery shopping has become a popular technique for gauging the quality of the services an organization offers - used extensively by banks, restaurants, hotels, and healthcare facilities (Lerner, 1991). When a standardized measurement/scoring scale is utilized by the mystery shopper evaluation, it is considered a form of direct performance rating (Myers, 1991). Direct performance ratings measure the degree of customer satisfaction achieved (in this case, that of the Mystery Diner) by the delivery of a service/product (Myers, 1991). Mystery shopper reports also provide performance evaluation feedback to employees and organizations, with the intent of helping the service providers improve their service skills (Lerner, 1991).

Mystery shopping evaluations are most effective when used in conjunction with other measurement tools as part of a larger quality assurance program (Lerner, 1991; Rosander, 1985). This is especially true because the Mystery Shopper is only one of numerous customers a business serves and is only reporting on a single service

encounter (Lerner, 1991). Due to this constraint, the critique does not reflect other environmental and behavioral events which may have had an impact on service quality at the given time of evaluation (Rosander, 1985).

However, Parasuraman et al. (1991, p. 46) do cite mystery shopping research as being an effective technique, overall, for evaluating the quality of service delivered by an organization staff. Mystery shopper evaluations are a sound method of measuring established process dimensions within a business that can help a firm to exploit its strengths and mend damaging weaknesses (Parasuraman et al., 1991).

Consumer Expectations & Perceptions

Expectations and perceptions are as unique and varied as the individuals whom possess them. Customer expectations can actually be divided into three levels:

desired - what is wanted

adequate - what is considered acceptable

predicted - what is believed will occur (Zeithaml et al., 1993)

Zeithaml et al. (1993) speak of the "zone of tolerance" in their expectations and perceptions literature. The zone of tolerance refers to the level of service that consumers consider acceptable during a given service encounter with any service

provider. The customer zone of tolerance has much to do with the availability of perceived options for like services/products. That is, the consumer zone of tolerance becomes smaller as the perceived choices become greater. For example, if numerous, comparable fine dining restaurants exist in a given area, those restaurants must consistently offer outstanding service/atmosphere/food to be competitive in the eyes of the consumer. This is due to the fact that there are many viable fine dining alternatives available to the patron.

As the consumer zone of tolerance shrinks, it becomes more imperative for service organizations to do things correctly the first time (Parasuraman et al., 1991). Service recovery can be costly and time consuming and the best course of action is for businesses to try and avoid the need to perform it, altogether (Rosander, 1985; Albrecht, 1992; Zeithaml et al., 1993).

Therefore, it is necessary for service providers to deliver what they state they will (Parasuraman et al., 1991), so that consumer perceptions do not fall short of their expectations - causing what Zeithaml et al. (1988, 1993) call a "gap". The smaller the gap between what the customer expects to occur and what they actually perceive to occur - the more satisfied the customer will be with the service/product. Thus, necessitating the need for gap management on the behalf of service providers.

Competitive advantage is earned by the organization that is able to deliver

what they promise...and more. The value-added perks are what help reach the consumer's true (ideal) desired expectations or, perhaps, exceed their expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1991). However, the value-added paradigm is progenerative in the mind of the customer, and once a standard is set, it must be proliferated by the organization (Barley, 1992). Hence, even though a company may be dealing with an elevated level of consumer wants/desires, they are none-the-less still managing customer expectations.

Once a standard or a level of expectation has been established by an organization, they must uncover the actual consumer perception of the delivered service. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways: by asking patrons, comment cards, mailed questionnaires, mystery shopping research, focus groups, etc...(Knutson et al., 1992). Comparing the standard with the actual perception scores/comments will uncover any gaps and allow them to be corrected.

Expectations can vary in accordance to the type of service/product that is being requested/purchased. For example, food and service expectations at a fast food restaurant are likely to be markedly different from those at a fine dining establishment.

This leads to a discussion of value. Parasuraman et al. (1991) acknowledge that price does affect customer expectations of a service/product. The more that is

paid for a service, the greater are the expectations associated with that anticipated service (thus, inferring that the costlier the service, the higher the quality it must be from the customer viewpoint) (Barsky, 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1991). Parasuraman et al. (1991) do continue to note that regardless of how little is paid for a service/product -there is no excuse for poor service. Continuous research must be institutionalized to gauge how price affects the consumer cost:value perception of the services provided by an organization.

SERVQUAL

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) have developed and tested a scale that expresses five dimensions of service and measures customer perceptions of service quality. It is called SERVQUAL. The five dimensions, as posed by Zeithaml et al. in a recent article from the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (1993), are as follows:

RELIABILITY	The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
-------------	--

TANGIBLES	The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.
-----------	---

RESPONSIVENESS The willingness to help customers and provide prompt service.

ASSURANCE The knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.

EMPATHY The caring, individualized attention provided to the customer.

(Zeithaml et al., 1993 taken from Parasuraman et al.,1988)

Parasuraman et al. (1988) were able to categorize customer responses (from a broad range of consumers representing various service sectors, including the hospitality industry) to service related questions, asked in a series of nationwide focus groups. To validate the qualitative findings, they compiled a questionnaire and quantitatively verified the focus group research. They found that most customer comments and feelings toward a particular service could be associated with the ability of the firm to deliver reliability, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy to the customer (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Reliability established itself, consistently, as the most important dimension of a service encounter (Parasuraman et al., 1991, Knutson et al., 1992). However, Parasuraman et al. (1991) make a distinction between reliability - which is concerned

with "service outcomes", and the other four dimensions - which deal with the "service process". So, while reliability is vital to meeting overall customer expectations, it is through the service processes - tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy - that customer expectations can be exceeded (Parasuraman et al., 1991) - or conversely, not reached at all. Those service processes can provide the customer with a value-added benefit.

Knutson et al. (1992) performed similar research (LODGSERV) using the SERVQUAL scale, but conducted it solely in the hotel industry. The report paralleled the results of the original study done by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1988 - lending credence to the universality of their five stated dimensions of service.

Similarly, Albrecht and Bradford (1990) discuss the existence of key service quality attributes; that is, the tangible and intangible aspects of a service delivery format as perceived and measured by the consumer. These key service quality attributes include more than just the physical product (if any) received or the final, rendered service - they encompass things such as body language, tone of voice, time spent waiting for a service/product, and sincerity (Barbee & Bott, 1991; Albrecht, 1992).

Service Benchmarking

Service benchmarking is a research task that measures service performance and processes, of competitor and best-of-class organizations (Greenwood, 1992), for the purpose of improving one's own service practices. The overall purpose is to attain comparative performance data (Vaziri, 1993).

However, an organization must first identify and measure its own service processes before it can start comparing them with those of another organization (Davis & Patrick, 1993). Core processes must be identified; that is, those functions which are critical to a successful service transaction (and overall organizational prosperity) (Davis & Patrick, 1993). In complex organizations, numerous core processes may co-exist (David & Patrick, 1993).

Different types of benchmarking are described in the literature. Strategic benchmarking involves the comparison of mission statements, vision, strategies, culture, key success factors, etc.. (Reilly, 1992). Operational benchmarking concentrates on processes utilized in R&D, production, sales, service format, administration, etc... (Reilly, 1992).

Benchmarking partners can be found within an organization, as well as outside an industry or country (Vaziri, 1993). A benchmarking endeavor performed by Sun

Health Alliance (a southeastern hospital network) utilized member network hospitals as benchmarking partners (Davis & Patrick, 1993).

Benchmarking can help alleviate complacency within the measuring organization and encourage it to make necessary, continuous improvements (Vaziri, 1993). Benchmarking has also been noted as an effective means of improving service performance and stimulating competitive advantage in healthcare facilities (Davis & Patrick, 1993), manufacturing firms, and various other service organizations.

Focus Groups

The focus group is a form of qualitative research whose purpose is to draw out the feelings and opinions of group participants, in regards to a given topic. A focus group, ideally, is composed of eight to ten persons, all of whom share some type of common behavior, and are of relatively the same age group (Greenbaum, 1993). The group is led through the subject discussion by a trained facilitator with the use of a guide sheet. The guide sheet lists several questions and topic areas which are to be covered during the focus session. It serves as a guideline for the session and makes certain that the needs of the sponsoring organization are fulfilled. A focus group session generally runs from one-and-a-half hours to two hours; and, at the end of the period, participants are commonly given some type of compensation for their time

and input (Greenbaum, 1993).

Focus groups are a productive and effective means of gathering information regarding consumer perceptions of services and products. They often help identify both the strong and weak points of the sponsoring organization, and can assist in uncovering service "gaps", as mentioned earlier (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml et al., 1993; Heskett et al., 1990; Albrecht & Bradford, 1990).

Focus groups are also commonly used as an exploratory research technique. The fact-finding session can be used to identify and clarify questions and issues which are deserving of further research (Greenbaum, 1993).

Employee Service Training

Service "awareness sessions", as Ciampa (1992) states, are designed to communicate the philosophy and concepts of total quality. They should be motivational meetings, in the sense that they describe the benefits (for the customer and the entire organization) of embodying TQ.

Awareness sessions describe the factors that may influence consumer satisfaction with a product/service - as illustrated by Albrecht's (1991) cycle of

service. The training sessions should help employees to realize that the manner in which a service is delivered is just as important, if not more, than the actual requested service/product, itself (Ciampa, 1992). Attention to detail and personalization of service are underlying themes of TQ and should also be covered in the awareness sessions.

The service awareness training program focuses on ways to increase both consumer and employee satisfaction. It is not a "how-to" discussion. It should be delivered with the intention of drawing employee attention to the importance of the services they offer and to improve the quality of service delivered to the consumer through motivating, encouraging, and inspiring employees with the potential benefits of total quality (Ciampa, 1992).

Quality Satisfaction Variables in the Food Service Industry

Key Consumer Expectation & Perception Variables

Using the five dimensions of service adapted from SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988) Knutson et al. (1992) developed LODGSERV. LODGSERV created unique sub-categories, under each of the five SERVQUAL service dimensions, that are germane to any hospitality operation. The variables particularly pertinent to the

foodservice industry are as follows: quick service recovery, services rendered on time, well-trained employees, guest feels comfortable, knowledgeable staff, prompt service, accommodation of special requests, neat personnel, quality food and beverage, attractive surroundings, decor that reflects concept, appropriate equipment, customer feels special/valued, anticipatory service, convenient hours, and healthful menus.

Also, performing research specifically in the lodging industry, Barsky (1992) compiled a hotel comment card, for research purposes, based on twenty interviews with U.S. and Japanese hotel general managers and 450 comment cards, from around the world. The variables found to be most vital by Barsky, in order of importance, were: 1. employee attitude

2. property location

3. appearance of rooms

4. price

5. facilities

6. reception area

7. service

8. parking

9. quality of food and beverage

In a broader service arena, dealing with means of measuring customer satisfaction and disconfirmation attributes, Myers (1991) developed six variables -

with various sub-categories - that describe key determinants of customer satisfaction when visiting a car dealership. The six variables include (in generic terms): employee interest in and attitude towards the customer, assortment of merchandise, price:value, physical facilities, outstanding features of the property and merchandise, and service format. The two most important variables being employee behavior towards the customer and merchandise assortment.

Barbee and Bott (1991) cite pollster George Gallup, Jr. (taken from "Americans Voice Opinions", 1987) whom states that factors such as time spent waiting, treatment by employees, and physical appearance of a property all affect the consumer perception of service quality. Barbee and Bott (1991) continue to state that empathy and helpfulness, in the delivery of a service, as actually determining whether or not the rendered service was truly beneficial.

In their research of customer perceptions of service at drive-through restaurants, Marcos, Tak, and Gregoire (1992) cite key consumer satisfaction variables, such as: consistency, thorough employee training, accuracy, courtesy, condition of parking lot, menu readability, receipt of correct order, speed of service (acknowledgement by staff and receipt of food), food quality, "personal touch", friendliness of staff, and price. They found that all of these variables affect the consumer value perception.

Site Selection Variables

In Great Britain, Auty (1992) surveyed consumers to ascertain which restaurant attributes lead to property selection when dining out. The preliminary results of the research yielded responses that could be collapsed into ten variable categories. Out of the ten variable levels on which restaurants compete, those that pertain to this study are (in order of importance):

1. food type
2. food quality
3. value for money spent
4. image & atmosphere
5. location
6. speed of service

However, Auty (1992) found, with further evaluation of unsolicited comments and data analysis, that the primary reason consumers choose to dine at a particular restaurant is based on the style of the establishment. Style including a combination of service format, decor, price, and attire & demeanor of clientele (Auty, 1992).

Quality Control Variables

Rosander (1985), while exploring quality control applications in service

industries, noted that the restaurant industry needs to control quality in four major sectors: **environmental** (indoor and outdoor property aesthetics), **behavioral** (employee interface with customers and accommodation of), **mechanics of delivery** (service processes and tasks), and **internal standards** (productivity, costs, dress codes, etc..).

Using these four quality areas as a guideline, Rosander (1985) compiled a quality control check sheet that borrows some variables from comment cards (currently being used in the hospitality industry) (see Appendix A) and state health inspection standards. Rosander breaks the check sheet down into operational units and service areas (location, receiving, kitchen, serving line, dining room service, counter service). The six operational categories are broken down into numerous variables (see Appendix A), all of which affect ultimate consumer satisfaction with a dining experience.

Rosander (1985) also compiled a list of variables that customers use to evaluate service in the hotel/motel industry. Again, the list was organized by operational categories, all with various sub-categories. These variables however are not exclusive to the hotel/motel industry and may be applicable to other hospitality operations (see Appendix A).

There are six items which create an over-riding theme to all of Rosander's

lists of variables and sub-categories. They deal with whether or not:

- * the customer feels that they received their money's worth
- * anything was lacking
- * the customer was satisfied
- * the quality was acceptable
- * sufficient choice was available
- * employees were courteous and helpful
- * service was prompt (Rosander, 1985)

Dining Room Service Rules & Etiquette

Each of the restaurants in the studied society is a fine dining establishment with moderate to high menu prices, and all conform to universally accepted dining room service rules and etiquette. Their employees are informed of this protocol, trained in the procedures/format, and are expected to perform their service duties in the universally accepted manner. A training booklet issued to all new dining room employees, by one of the member restaurants of the society, amply illustrates these rules and etiquette (see Appendix B). The purpose of the standardized procedures is specifically mentioned in the training booklet (Wallington, 1986) which states that all guests should receive the same level of high quality service, each time they visit the restaurant, regardless of who the server may be.

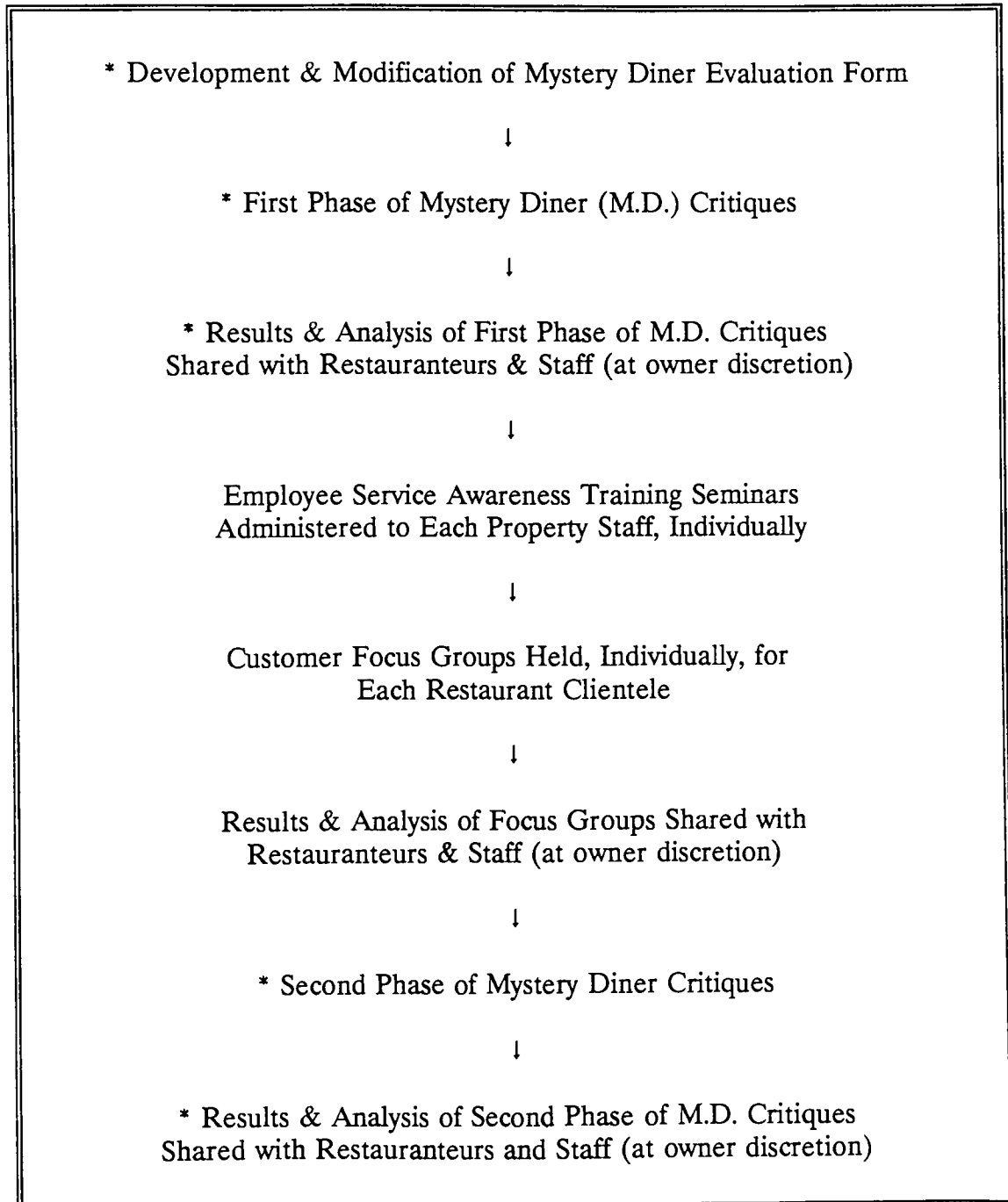
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Methodology & Research Design

FIGURE 1

Holistic Overview of the Quality Service Program



* Components covered in this thesis

Thesis Overview

This study was based on the design, usage, and data analysis of a Mystery Diner Evaluation form, including the selection and categorization of variables and their subsequent weighting. In conjunction with a larger quality assurance program (shown in figure 1 on the preceeding page), this measurement tool was utilized and analyzed for its merits as an effective means of measuring service performance and consumer satisfaction at the restaurants in the society.

The customer-employee service satisfaction link was the other dimension of the larger quality assurance research done with the restaurant society and is reported, in part, in the Crystal thesis (1993). Again, this report focuses solely on the Mystery Diner Evaluation dimension of the service quality research program. Specific attention was paid to the form development and its ability to clearly depict and evaluate the quality of a restaurant service encounter.

Development of Mystery Diner Evaluation Tool

Instrument Character

The Mystery Diner instrument was designed to be as objective as possible. Its manifest purpose was that of a learning tool and, therefore, needed to illustrate specific strengths and weaknesses of the dining experience so that they could be addressed by the restaurateurs. However, scoring of this type is necessarily somewhat subjective, as human perceptions of the dining experience are.

Research Basis

The Mystery Diner Evaluation form was devised from a combination of sample restaurant and service related comment cards and evaluation forms; contemporary studies being conducted in the service industry relating to consumer satisfaction and perceptions; total quality service literature; universal service rules and dining room etiquette, and through basic operating knowledge of the food service industry. The majority of the evaluation segments have a definite slant on the service element of the dining experience. Many of the questions/prompts are concerned with the demeanor, behavior, performance, and professionalism of the restaurant staff. The reason for this was that the Mystery Diner Evaluation form, as well as the entire research program, drew heavily from the SERVQUAL research document and its emphasis on customer service as a determinant of consumer satisfaction. The evaluation instrument was designed to address and critique both the tangible and intangible aspects of the dining experience.

Construct & Design/Modification/Approval

At the first meeting with the society board, the restaurateurs expressed a distinct desire to have the quality of the food and dining room service specifically critiqued. Therefore, a significant portion of the Mystery Diner Evaluation form is devoted to the areas of food and dining room service.

However, serious consideration was given to the SERVQUAL research findings regarding the significance of factors other than "tangibles" on consumer satisfaction. With the SERVQUAL research in mind, an effort was also made to emphasize consumer satisfaction indicators such as service reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy through constructing questions/prompts that could evaluate tangible expressions of these intangible service concepts.

The Mystery Diner Evaluation form was developed and modified through a series of meetings with the society board, at which they expressed their opinions, concerns, and constructive criticisms. Final approval for use of the form was given by the board after the evaluation form was modified to their specifications.

Categories & Point Allocation

Overview

The measurement tool is organized by operational unit categories. The categories were devised by mapping out the entire "cycle of service" that the customer encounters from the moment they make a reservation - and form some type of impression of the establishment - to the moment they pay the bill and leave the premise (see Figure 2 on pages 40-41). All of these "moments of truth" were organized in order of their occurrence in a fine dining restaurant.

Category point allocations were determined primarily in **two ways**:

1. The amount of physical time spent by the patron in the functional category/area.

for eg: Category VI, Dining Room, and all the services rendered therein constitute 65 % (65 points) of the entire evaluation form. Such great value was given to category VI based on the premise that the consumer frequents the restaurant to eat and be served (and perhaps "entertained"), and will thus spend the majority of their time in the dining room. The various "other" areas of the restaurant/dining experience constitute the remaining 35 % (35 points) of the Mystery Diner form, as they still may impact on the customer perception of the total dining experience.

2. The degree of the effect the functional category has on ultimate guest

satisfaction; that is, "what is the category's significance in proportion to the **entire** dining experience?".

for example: Regardless of how well kept and attractive the aesthetics of the restaurant are, if the service and/or food are of poor quality, the customer will not be inclined to return to the restaurant. Conversely, if the food and service are of excellent quality, the consumer may be willing to overlook some aesthetic imperfections.

The evaluation form has a total of six functional categories, as well as a section for closing comments. Amongst the six categories, exist a total of 25 sub-categories (see Appendix C).

The measurement tool is based on a total possible score of 100 points. As mentioned above, categories were allotted points on the basis of their significance to the customer in selecting a restaurant and how greatly they impact the consumer perception of the dining experience.

All evaluated restaurants start with a total of 100 points and arrive at their final scores after the valuated errors/infractions (in the form of points) have been subtracted from the original 100 points.

Final total scores were reported to each restaurant in complete confidence,

along with the Mystery Diner Evaluation form that included comments and the point break-downs. Composite scores were given to the entire restaurant society for each category, including an overall (average) societal score. The range of scores and the mean score (out of the given possible points for each category) were shared for each category.

Breakdown

FIGURE 2 MYSTERY DINER EVALUATION FORM BREAKDOWN

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>POINT VALUE</u>	<u>PURPOSE</u>	<u>VARIABLES</u>
I Outside Aesthetics	5	Examine exterior image of restaurant	General Maintenance, Location Convenience, & Guest Safety
II Inside Aesthetics	5	Examine interior image of restaurant	General Maintenance & Sanitation
III Reservations	5	Address guest treatment when making a reservation	Guest Accommodation & Reservation Process
IV Host/Hostess	5	Examine attentiveness & hospitable response to the guest	Host/Hostess Demeanor & Appearance
V Bar/Lounge Area	15	Address quality of drink, quality of service, hospitable response to the guest	Staff demeanor, Service Procedures, Drink-Making Mechanics, & Cleanliness
VI Dining Room	65	Examine all activities and services/products that are rendered in the Dining Room	Atmosphere, Place Setting, Menu Service, & Food
<u>Sub-Categories</u>			
VI A - Atmosphere	3	Examine Ambience, Flow of theme, Cleanliness, Welcoming nature	Lighting, Climate Control, Music, Decor, Clearing Habits

FIGURE 2 (continued)

VI	B - Place Setting	7	Examine cleanliness, maintenance, & appropriateness of all eating equipment and decorative items	Flatware, Glassware, China, Linen,
VI	C - Menu	5	Evaluate effectiveness, readability, content quality, & appearance of <u>all</u> menus	Food Item Variety, Selection, Descriptions, Blocking, Print-Size, Organization
VI	D - Service	25	Address quality of service and hospitable response to guest	Staff Demeanor & Appearance, Pace of Service, Service Mechanics, & Attentiveness
VI	E - Food	25	Examine quality of food	Taste, Appearance, Plate Presentation, "Truth-in-Menu", Texture, Consistency, Quality of Ingredients, Garnish, Proportion Size, Proper Preparation/Cooking, Price : Value Relationship

Sample Population

The sample population consisted of seven fine dining restaurants which are independently owned and located in Western New York State. The seven properties constitute a restaurant society that shares advertising and promotional functions as well as professional camaraderie. The restaurant society was deliberately chosen due to its explicit expressed interest in participating in total quality programs and research.

Surveying Procedure

Three persons, unknown to the restaurant staff (a "mystery diner"), dined out at each of the seven properties. To maintain the anonymity of the mystery diner, a society gift certificate entitling the bearer to a dinner for two persons (inclusive) was presented at the completion of the meal as payment for the bill. Utilizing the Mystery Diner Evaluation form, the mystery diner scored each property on its performance and made explanatory comments (if necessary) within the numerous categories of the evaluation form. This process was performed twice. First, to establish the standard or status quo for current operating standards at the individual properties and the entire restaurant society. The second phase of critiques was

performed to measure any changes in individual restaurant and society service performance levels after the enactment of quality assurance programs within the society.

To achieve inter-rater reliability, the restaurants were critiqued by more than one person, all using the same Mystery Diner Evaluation form. All three of the mystery diners possess a formal background in restaurant operations, dining room service procedures, and food preparation.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Results & Discussion

As mentioned earlier, a great emphasis was placed on customer service. The result of this was that a greater point loss occurred, on the behalf of the restaurant, when there was a service void rather than a technical error (with the exception of the food category which was judged solely on its tangible merits). It should also be noted that each total property score was not based solely on the cost of the meal, but on the inherent worth of what was obtained for the amount of money spent. This method of evaluation was utilized because all of the society restaurants do not operate identical style/caliber dining establishments.

The overall scores in the initial round of Mystery Dining Evaluations were, generally, very high for all the society restaurants. Hence, the individual restaurant scores in the follow-up round of Mystery Dining Evaluations did not fluctuate greatly (up or down) with the original, standard-setting, scores - with perhaps the exception of two properties which increased their total scores by over 20 points, respectively.

Table 1, on the following page, illustrates the composite results of the first and second phase of Mystery Diner critiques. In each category, the second phase of

categorical composite scores did show an increase in points achieved and percent of criteria met over the first set of categorical composite scores. Categorical ranges were also tightened up in the second phase of critiques - in come cases significantly, namely: Outside Aesthetics, Reservations, Place Setting, and Food.

Data Analysis & Findings

RESTAURANT SOCIETY COMPOSITE SCORES

Table 1

		<u>SCORES</u>	
I.	Outside Aesthetics	<u>1st Phase</u>	<u>2nd Phase</u>
	Range = 2 low - 5 high; mode 5.0 (5)	4.2/5.0 (84%)	
	Range = 4.5 low - 5 high; mode 5.0 (4)		4.8/5.0 (96%)
II.	Inside Aesthetics		
	Range = 3 low - 5 high; mode 4.75 (4)	4.5/5.0 (90%)	
	Range = 3.5 low - 5 high; mode 5.0 (4)		4.7/5.0 (94%)
III.	Reservations		
	Range = 1 low - 5 high; mode 5.0 (6)	4.8/5.0 (96%)	
	Range = 4 low - 5 high; mode 5.0 (6)		4.9/5.0 (98%)
IV.	Host/Hostess		
	Range = 2 low - 5 high; mode 5.0 (3)	4.0/5.0 (80%)	
	Range = 3.5 low - 5 high; mode 5.0 (4)		4.6/5.0 (92%)
V.	Bar/Lounge		
	Range = 7 low - 15 high; mode 15.0 (4)	13.5/15 (90%)	
	Range = 8.5 low - 15 high; mode 15 (4)		13.6/15 (91%)
VI.	Dining Room (overall)	49.5/65 (76%)	55.16/65 (85%)
A.	Atmosphere		
	Range = 1.5 low - 3.0 high; mode 3.0 (4)	2.6/3.0 (87%)	

TABLE 1 (continued)

	Range = 2.75 low - 3 high; mode 3.0 (6)	2.96/3.0 (99%)
B.	Place Setting	
	Range = 2.0 low - 7.0 high; mode 5.75 (2) 5.25/7.0 (75%)	
	Range = 5 low - 7 high; mode 7.0 (2)	6.2/7.0 (89%)
C.	Menu	
	Range = 3.0 low - 5.0 high; mode 5.0 (3) 4.25/5.0 (85%)	
	Range = 4.0 low - 5.0 high; mode 5.0 (5)	4.7/5.0 (94%)
D.	Service	
	Range = 15 low - 24 high	20.6/25 (82%)
	Range = 17 low - 25 high	22.4/25 (90%)
E.	Food	
	Range = 5 low - 22 high	16.8/25 (67%)
	Range = 15 low - 21 high	18.9/25 (76%)
Total Societal Composite Score:		80.5/100% 87.8/100%

*** KEY**

Range = # low - # high;
(span of scores)

mode #
(most common score)

(#)
(frequency of mode)

#/#
(average score/maximum possible score)

(%)
(percent of criteria achieved)

Paired T-tests were performed for each of the seven properties (using coded letters A through G), for each category of the Mystery Diner form, comparing scores of the first and second phases of critiques (that is before and after scores). Each of the nine categorical paired T-tests showed no significant changes in performance. That is, they failed to reject H_0 at $\alpha = 0.05$.

However, seven categories/sub-categories did illustrate some notable variance when plotted on connected point graphs, as illustrated in Tables 2-8, on the following pages. Plotted point graphs for the remaining categories/sub-categories are not shown, as they depicted little or no change between phases 1 and 2 of Mystery Diner Critiques.

The symbols below, used in Tables 2-8, and their significance are as follow:

(Letters) A-G = the 7 restaurant properties

H_0 = a hypothesis to be tested; a null hypothesis

H_a = a hypothesis that should be considered as an alternative to the null hypothesis;
an alternative hypothesis

μ = population mean

p = population proportion; percentage of the population that has the specified attribute

α = significance level of the hypothesis test

t-Statistic = test statistic; statistic which determines whether or not to accept the null hypothesis

(Weiss, 1989)

An important point, also illustrated by Tables 2-8, is after the Mystery Diner Program was enacted, the society restaurants demonstrated a more consistent and higher quality performance as a group; that is, variance did decrease, but not significantly.

TABLE 2

OUTSIDE AESTHETICS

Before and After Score Analysis

Paired t-Test of $\mu(1 - 2)$

No Selector

Individual Alpha Level 0.05

$H_0: \mu(1 - 2) = 0$ $H_a: \mu(1 - 2) \neq 0$

oa before - oa after :

Test $H_0: \mu(\text{oa before} - \text{oa after}) = 0$ vs $H_a: \mu(\text{oa before} - \text{oa after}) \neq 0$

Mean of Paired Differences = -0.60714286 t-Statistic = -1.516 w/6 df

Fail to reject H_0 at Alpha = 0.05

p = 0.1802

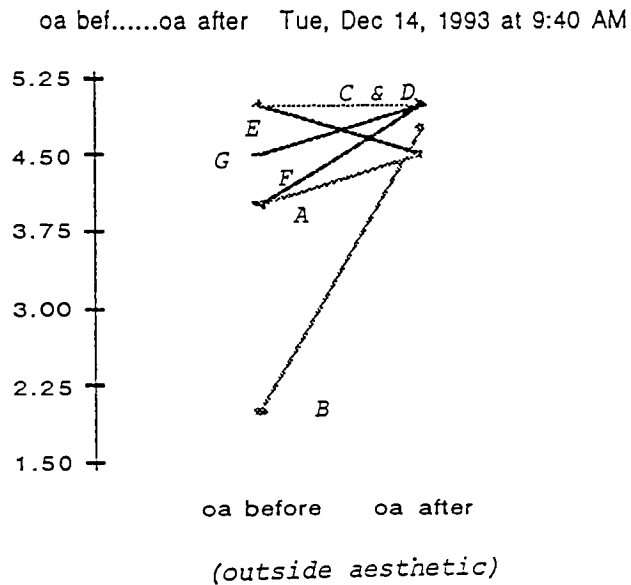


TABLE 3

HOST

Before and After Score Analysis

Paired t-Test of $\mu(1 - 2)$

No Selector

Individual Alpha Level 0.05

$H_0: \mu(1 - 2) = 0$ $H_a: \mu(1 - 2) \neq 0$

host before - host after:

Test $H_0: \mu(\text{host before} - \text{host after}) = 0$ vs $H_a: \mu(\text{host before} - \text{host after}) \neq 0$

Mean of Paired Differences = -0.50000000 t-Statistic = -0.917 w/6 df

Fail to reject H_0 at Alpha = 0.05

p = 0.3947

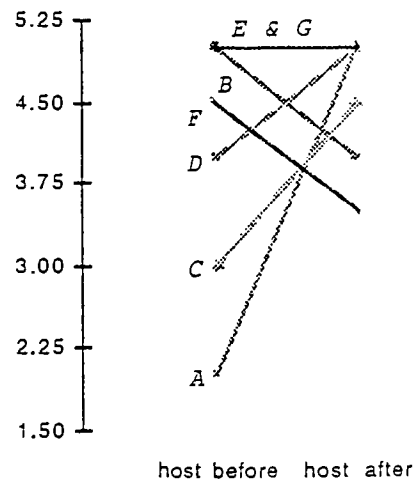


TABLE 4

ATMOSPHERE

Before and After Score Analysis

Paired t-Test of $\mu(1 - 2)$

No Selector

Individual Alpha Level 0.05

$H_0: \mu(1 - 2) = 0$ $H_a: \mu(1 - 2) \neq 0$

atmos before - atmos after :

Test $H_0: \mu(\text{atmos before-atmos after}) = 0$ vs $H_a: \mu(\text{atmos before-atmos after}) \neq 0$

Mean of Paired Differences = -0.39285714 t-Statistic = -1.616 w/6 df

Fail to reject H_0 at Alpha = 0.05

p = 0.1572

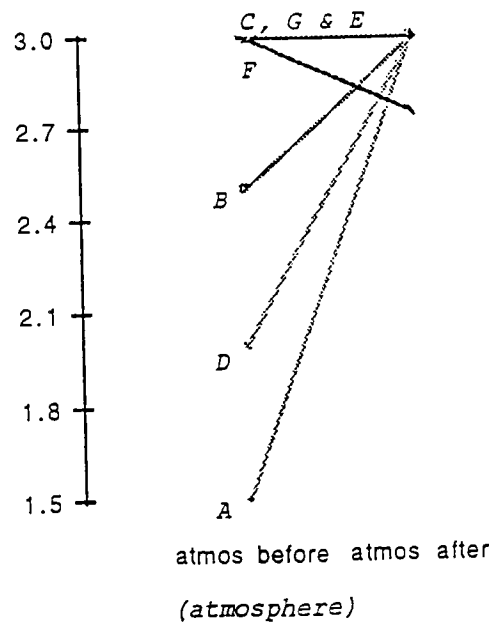


TABLE 5

PLACE SETTING

Before and After Score Analysis

Paired t-Test of $\mu(1 - 2)$

No Selector

Individual Alpha Level 0.05

$H_0: \mu(1 - 2) = 0$ $H_a: \mu(1 - 2) \neq 0$

ps before - ps after:

Test $H_0: \mu(\text{ps before} - \text{ps after}) = 0$ vs $H_a: \mu(\text{ps before} - \text{ps after}) \neq 0$

Mean of Paired Differences = -0.96428571 t-Statistic = -1.100 w/6 df

Fail to reject H_0 at Alpha = 0.05

p = 0.3137

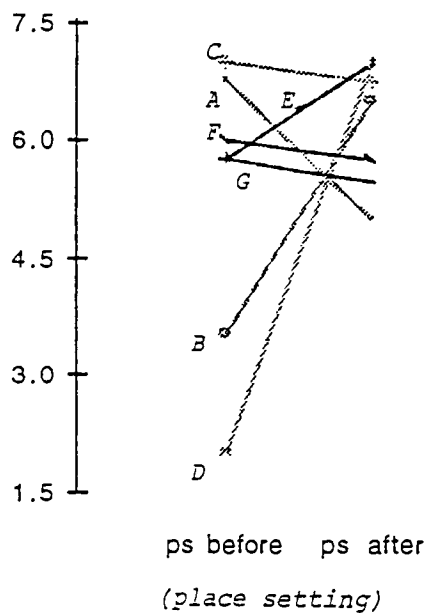


TABLE 6

MENU

Before and After Score Analysis

Paired t-Test of $\mu(1 - 2)$

No Selector

Individual Alpha Level 0.05

$H_0: \mu(1 - 2) = 0$ $H_a: \mu(1 - 2) \neq 0$

menu before - menu after:

Test $H_0: \mu(\text{menu before-menu after}) = 0$ vs $H_a: \mu(\text{menu before-menu after}) \neq 0$

Mean of Paired Differences = -0.46428571 t-Statistic = -1.277 w/6 df

Fail to reject H_0 at Alpha = 0.05

p = 0.2489

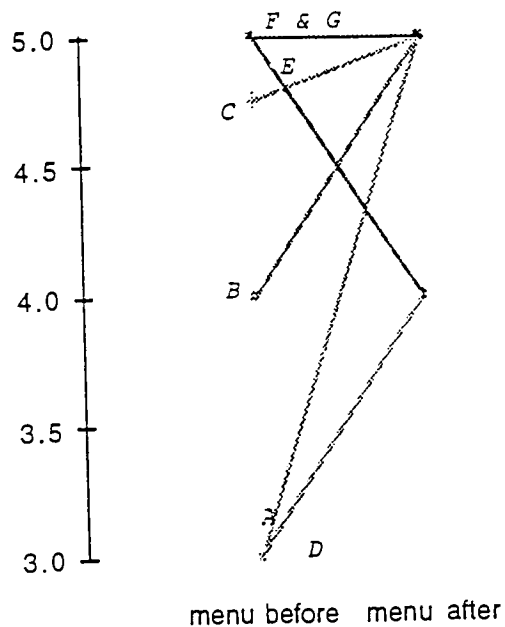


TABLE 7

SERVICE

Before and After Score Analysis

Paired t-Test of $\mu(1 - 2)$

No Selector

Individual Alpha Level 0.05

Ho: $\mu(1 - 2) = 0$ Ha: $\mu(1 - 2) \neq 0$

serv before - serv after :

Test Ho: $\mu(\text{serv before-serv after}) = 0$ vs Ha: $\mu(\text{serv before-serv after}) \neq 0$

Mean of Paired Differences = -1.7857143 t-Statistic = -1.809 w/6 df

Fail to reject Ho at Alpha = 0.05

p = 0.1205

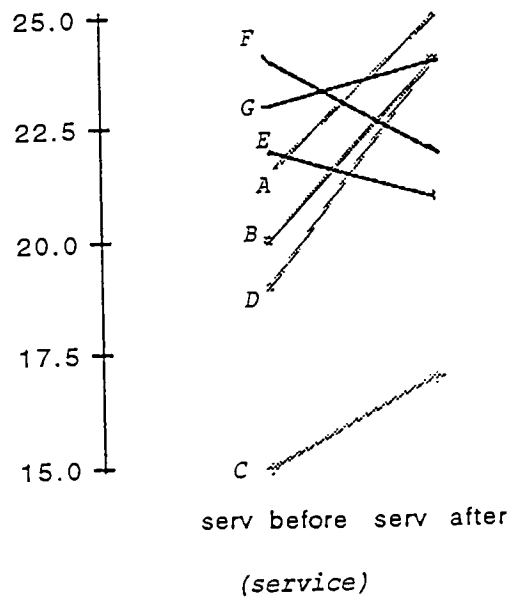


TABLE 8

FOOD

Before and After Score Analysis

Paired t-Test of $\mu(1 - 2)$

No Selector

Individual Alpha Level 0.05

Ho: $\mu(1 - 2) = 0$ Ha: $\mu(1 - 2) \neq 0$

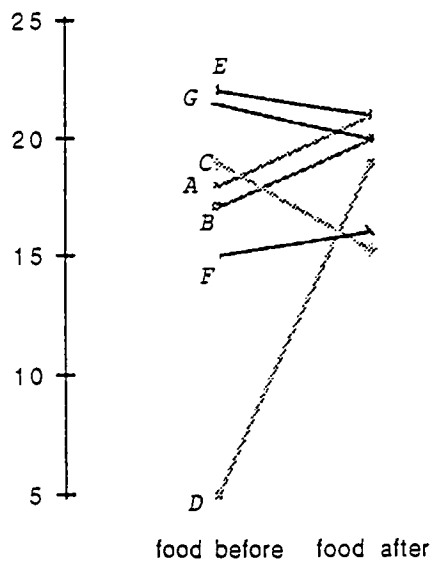
food before - food after:

Test Ho: $\mu(\text{food before}-\text{food after}) = 0$ vs Ha: $\mu(\text{food before}-\text{food after}) \neq 0$

Mean of Paired Differences = -2.1071429 t-Statistic = -0.963 w/6 df

Fail to reject Ho at Alpha = 0.05

p = 0.3729



CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In response to the question posed at the onset of this thesis research, "How well are we, as a restaurant society, meeting customer expectations?", according to the results of the Mystery Diner Evaluations and related focus groups [discussed in Crystal (1993)], the restaurant society is generally meeting, and in some cases exceeding, customer expectations. However, it was apparent from both measurement tools that there are some areas (within each of the seven properties) that have room for improvement. Again, overall the restaurant society is capably providing quality services to its guests.

Six structional goals were set to direct the performance of the Mystery Diner Research Program - specifically, to ensure the effective utilization of a service measurement tool, that is, the Mystery Diner Evaluation form. The goals, along with the means by which they were achieved, are as follows:

Goal # 1 Identify the quality attributes of the dining experience that a fine dining restaurant offers.

This goal was achieved by mapping out the "cycle of service" of a fine dining restaurant through identifying all the "moments of truth" in the service encounter. A literature review was performed to research customer expectations of similar service situations and the restauranteurs of the society gave insight as to the expectations of their clientele. As part of the larger quality assurance program, customer focus groups exacted specific information regarding consumer perceptions and expectations at the restaurants within the society and fine dining restaurants in general.

Goal #2 Measure restaurant performance of the key service quality attributes.

Goal #2 was achieved by developing a Mystery Diner Evaluation form that included all the restaurant quality attributes and rated restaurant performance of these attributes through the use of a point system. Also, in the course of the customer focus groups, patrons were asked directly how they perceived the restaurant to be fulfilling their expectations and their responses were recorded and reported back to the society restauranteurs.

Goal #3 Assist the restaurant society in meeting/exceeding customer expectations.

Goal #3 was met by exacting specific information regarding each restaurants'

performance in critical attribute areas (tangible and intangible) through the use of the Mystery Diner Evaluation form and customer focus groups. As evidenced by the follow-up phase of Mystery Diner critiques, the restaurateurs and staff responded to the majority of the moments made in the initial round of critiques by making the needed adjustments/changes to the dining experience.

Goal #4 Develop a standardized service evaluation form, specifically for the restaurant industry, that would allow a Mystery Diner to evaluate the quality of a dining experience by illuminating service strengths and weaknesses and indicate the degree to which all society properties are operating under the same service quality standards.

In achieving Goal #4, the Mystery Diner critique form was created to force the evaluator to pinpoint their perceptions of each aspect of the dining experience by building in very specific and detailed category prompts and questions. Point allocations were made to each category, giving a numeric worth to the quality variables. Point loss within a category was directly attributed to an unfavorable comment/response to a prompt or question. This structured objectivity enabled the Mystery Diner Evaluation tool to maintain a high level of its effectiveness, objectivity, and accuracy amongst raters. The degree to which all the society restaurants are operating under the same service quality standards is illustrated by the categorical composite scoring analysis.

Goal #5 Increase employee and restaurateur awareness of customer satisfaction influencing variables.

The Mystery Diner evaluation form, itself, is a "roadmap" of all the variables a guest encounters during a dining experience, thus helping the operators to see all the factors that constitute the consumer impression of a fine dining experience.

Customer focus groups revealed consumer perceptions of their dining experiences at society restaurants and employee training sessions covered concepts such as "moments of truth", "cycles of service", and managing consumer expectations and perceptions. These ideas were covered as a way to broaden employee understanding regarding the dining experience from the customer viewpoint.

Goal #6 Increase the level of customer dining satisfaction at the society restaurants.

Overall, the second set of Mystery Diner evaluations showed a society performance rating increase of 7.3, from a total of 80.5% to 87.8%. This demonstrates that the Mystery Diners performing the evaluations encountered an overall higher level of dining satisfaction after the Mystery Diner Program was completed.

However, it would be impossible to determine whether or not the entire society customer base has experienced greater dining satisfaction after the Mystery Diner Program was enacted, than before, without asking the society clientele. As a result, these research findings are inconclusive in the respect that they do not address the perceptions of a larger, fine dining, population.

Conclusions

At this point of the quality research assurance program the Mystery Diner Evaluation form appears to be a fair, thorough, and consistent form of evaluating service, regardless of the evaluator. Lending to the effectiveness of the measurement instrument is the fact that the majority of the restaurants improved their scores in the post evaluation and, overall, mistakes/weakness noted in the initial Mystery Diner Evaluation were corrected or improved upon in the post evaluation; these changes being attributed to the specificity of the Mystery Diner tool.

The focus on the effectiveness/helpfulness of the Mystery Diner evaluation tool should in no way detract from the entire Mystery Dining System which was employed in this research. It is the firm belief of the researcher (grounded in similar service research literature and the Mystery Diner Evaluation findings relating particularly to service delivery) that the evident quality improvements made by the restaurants would not have been possible without enlisting the support, opinions, and talent of the restaurant employees and customers. The employee service awareness training seminars and customer focus groups were an integral part of calling the employees attention to the importance and nuances of quality service and confirming and uncovering customer expectations and opinions regarding their views of quality service in a fine dining establishment.

However, admittedly, the only way to test this hypothesis would be to test the effectiveness of each component of the mystery diner quality assurance program separately and individually.

Implications for Further Research

1. The development of a new mystery diner tool, divided into 3 sections is proposed:

Service 50%

Food 25%

Atmosphere 25%

Note: Focus group research showed that the combination of these three factors were vital to a fine dining experience - however, many of their comments revealed satisfaction indicators that were significantly dependent upon the human element of the dining experience; ie: staff behavior, attitudes, body language, tone of voice, choice of words, appearance, general demeanor, skill level, attentiveness, and professionalism.

The current mystery dining tool is divided by operational units/boundaries, the new tool should be divided by the 3 critical fine dining factors (CFDF)

and the operational categories and questions should be redistributed under the 3 CFDF headings. Doing so, would most likely shorten the form, as well. This new tool should then be tested for accuracy at the same society (if possible) as well as other comparable competitor restaurants.

2. To increase the quality and quantity of statistical information that can be extracted from the findings of the Mystery Diner Evaluation form, it would be helpful to alter the point allocations of all the categories of the Mystery Diner form so that they are each worth the same amount of points. However, the categories should be weighted in the final statistical analysis, in direct relation to their importance to the total dining experience.
3. In the future, society competitors should be studied and evaluated to establish a benchmark outside of the group. The competitor study should include, but not be limited to, local competitor restaurants as well as like establishments in other regions (ie: best of class). The Mystery Diner process should be continued over the next five years, during the first year to establish a true standard and over the next four to establish trends (in operating effectiveness and seasonal demarcations), continuing the process over a five year period will also help determine if the program, used as a continuous measurement and feedback tool, is effective at improving and/or maintaining consumer satisfaction. Ultimately, the goal of this research would be to carry the

Mystery Diner Program (if it proves successful) to other sectors of the hospitality industry and eventually other service intensive industries.

4. The society restaurateurs should evaluate and pilot test the new, proposed Mystery Diner Form and the Mystery Diner Program should be continued with the seven restaurants for a period of at least five years. The continued program should include employee service training and customer focus groups. Studying the restaurant society over a five-year period will uncover any trends (long-term and short-term), evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the Mystery Diner Evaluation form as a tool for increasing customer satisfaction, and the usefulness and longevity of employee service training in direct correlation to customer satisfaction and Mystery Diner Evaluation scores.
5. Ask clientele if their dining satisfaction is/has increased, decreased and map this over a five year time period concurrent with the ongoing Mystery Diner Evaluations. Customer opinions could be solicited in the form of comment cards and questionnaires, and/or focus groups. Comment cards and questionnaires should be formulated from the information and data uncovered during customer focus groups and from Mystery Diner Evaluation findings.

Appendix A

Quality Variables and Sample Comment Cards

Customer Complaints. The complaints listed below are those which have been gathered from customers, including tourists, conventioners, and business men:

1. Cancellations of reservations at 6 p.m. because the airplane was late or because some other factor over which the customer has no control delayed arrival. In one case, this caused several parties to have to hunt for accommodations that were very difficult to find; one party had to travel 10 miles to find a place to stay.
2. Tough and rough treatment received by cash customers who are forced to pay the entire amount due in advance. The assumption is that the credit card holder is honest, the cash customer is dishonest.
3. Long wait for a room through room was reserved and arrival was before 6 p.m. or paid for. In one case, several parties had to wait about an hour before a room was available.

4. A serious error was made on the reservation dates which were arranged by long distance telephone. The person taking the telephone call was not the person filling out and mailing notice of the reservation. A letter and another telephone call were necessary to straighten out the matter.
5. A high price was charged, but the room was small, plain, and cramped; the low quality did not justify the price charged.
6. In one room, there was only one chair for two persons; in another case, the lights were very dim, making reading impossible.
7. Did not give room at the price advertised, but at a much higher one despite ample advance notice.
8. Room was very cold and drafty with no control over air conditioning.
9. Thermostat does not work so there is no control over heat.
10. In an expensive hotel, head unit does not work so unit was replaced with a new unit.
11. Trouble and delay in obtaining extra blankets for cold nights.

12. No notice that there would be no Sunday breakfast served in the hotel, even though the nearest open restaurant was several miles away.
13. Worn out black and white television set.
14. Restricted variety of food available with little or no choice, even though prices are high. Food was largely gourmet type. No variety for those who prefer something else.
15. For a high priced hotel, the choice at the salad bar was a disaster. Some small town restaurant have better salad bars.
16. Room was dirty; carpet needed cleaning since it was covered with food and drink spots.
17. Room was simply too low quality for the price charged: a complaint made by two business men who traveled widely and stayed in the better hotels.

A quality control inventory. The following is a detailed list of items which are to be considered when measuring the quality of service. All of them are involved when the buyer (customer) comes to appraise the service he or she is receiving:

1. Reservations:

- a. Ease of obtaining
- b. Ability to get what is wanted
- c. Delay time
- d. Error free
- e. Attitude
- f. Written confirmation
- g. 6 p.m. rule
- h. Check in, honoring reservations
- i. Baggage handling

2. Room:

- a. Size
- b. Furnishings: table, chairs, beds, carpet, dresser, drapes, curtains
- c. Cleanliness
- d. Heating, cooling, ventilation
- e. Lighting, lamps, windows
- f. Radio, TV, clock
- g. Linens, blankets
- h. Noise, disturbances
- i. Bathroom: shower, tub, plumbing, towels, hotel water, soap
- j. Linen changed daily

k. Room service

3. Food:

- a. Availability of restaurants
- b. Hours
- c. Prices
- d. Variety, choice
- e. Table service
- f. Waiting time for service
- g. Waiting line to enter
- h. Salad bar
- i. Quality of food
- j. Are menu substitutions allowed
- k. Atmosphere, environment
- l. Attitude of employees
- m. Courtesy

4. Bar:

- a. Cocktail lounge, bar
- b. Availability
- c. Hours
- d. Variety, choice

- e. Quality
 - f. Cost
 - g. Delay in service
5. Other services:
- a. Parking
 - b. Transportation information
 - c. Sightseeing information
 - d. City information
 - e. Newspapers and magazines
 - f. Common medicines
 - g. Gift shop
 - h. Mail box
 - i. Telephone service
 - j. Laundry
 - k. Baggage service, baggage storage
 - l. Souvenirs
 - m. Postage stamps
 - n. Snacks
 - o. Elevators: location, adequacy, waiting time
 - p. Taxi service
 - q. Other transportation service

r. Airport service

6. Check out:

- a. Baggage service
- b. Transportation arrangements
- c. Billing cashier
- d. Attitude
- e. Waiting line

A short questionnaire of quality questions. The following contains some of the major questions which bear on the quality of the service rendered with a customer needs to answer:

1. Room: Did you receive your money's worth?

Was anything lacking?

Were you satisfied?

2. Food: Did you receive your money's worth?

Was anything lacking?

Were you satisfied?

Did you have the choice you wanted?

Was the quality acceptable?

3. **Drinks:** Did you receive your money's worth?

 Were you satisfied?

 Was anything lacking?

 Did you have the choice you wanted?
4. Were you treated courteously: at reservation desk, by room attendants, by bell hops, by waiters, by waitresses, by the hostess, at the check out, by sales persons, by others?
5. Reservation and check out: Were these prompt? error free? did you get what you wanted? what you requested?
6. Would you come back/ Would you patronize this chain elsewhere?

Restaurants and Cafeterias

Quality control areas. In a restaurant or cafeteria, there are many areas in which quality is involved. There is the quality of purchased products, materials, and ingredients. These include all kinds of food products - everything from raw fruits, vegetables and meats to products of a bakery such as pies, rolls, bread, and cakes. There are also cleaning and maintenance supplies. There is the problem of damage caused to products during shipment, unloading, and unpacking. These are returned for credit.

Quality of employee performance also has top priority. Without high quality products - meat, vegetables, fruits, bakery goods, canned goods, etc. - not even the best person can produce high quality food. Quality performance applies to everyone: chefs, cooks, assistants, dishwashers, janitors, handymen, waiters, waitresses, servers, hostesses, counterpersons, cashiers, bartenders, busboys, busgirls, and anyone else who works anywhere in the restaurant or cafeteria.

The goal of quality performance is to give the customer good quality food and an affordable or reasonable price. To reach this goal means:

1. Giving the customer what he or she wants.
2. Serving the customer with a minimum amount of delay: waiting to be seated, waiting to have order take, waiting to receive food, waiting for a bill.
3. Serving the customer with good quality food and beverage.
4. Serving the customer with consideration and courtesy.
5. Listening politely to any customer complaint and resolving it immediately.
6. Listening to customer's questions carefully and answering courteously.

Quality control check sheet. A quality control check sheet that includes the major characteristics involved in quality performance, quality management, and quality audit is outlined below. This check list includes, but goes far beyond, what a local or state health inspector is authorized to examine and approve or disapprove.

This quality check list is aimed at helping management to improve the quality aspects of the entire operation or establishment, not just one part of it.

1. **Location:**

- a. Accessibility
- b. Location
- c. Parking and parking lights
- d. Surroundings
- e. Condition of parking lot

2. **Receiving:**

- a. Facilities
- b. Unloading
- c. Controls
- d. Distribution and storage

3. **Kitchen:**

- a. Layout, arrangement
- b. Equipment
- c. Sanitation
- d. Cleanliness:
 personal including clothing, hair

dishes

equipment

utensils

floors

cabinets

e. Division of work

f. Work places and areas

g. Safety measures;

fire extinguishers

exits

exhaust systems, ventilation

handling hot substances

clothing

swinging doors, traffic routing

h. System for handling orders: verbal

written slips of paper

checked slips

other

i. Delay time:

time to fill various orders

time waiting for pickup

j. Preparation of orders:

time sequence

proper preparation

cooked as ordered

served as ordered

food quality

4. Serving line (cafeteria):

Arrangement

Identification of dishes with prices

Service time

Speed at which line moves

Variety of dishes to select from

Posting of entries with prices near entrance to speed up selection

Are there waiters or waitresses to take trays to tables?

Arrangements to speed up movement of line

Do servers understand requests and serve promptly?

Does cashier itemize dishes correctly and promptly?

5. Dining room service:

Cleanliness of tables, chairs, booths

Variety of menu: is there a choice

Waiting time to obtain a table

Waiting time to have order taken

Waiting time to have order prepared

Waiting time to have waitress or waiter serve

Truth in menu: are dishes served for what is on the menu

Is food hot or cold; satisfying quality

Did customer receive special dinner that was advertised?

Attitude of hostess

Attitude of waitress, waiter

Are exits clearly indicated

Was bill correct

Atmosphere: noise, quiet, relaxed

Ventilation, drafts, comfortable

Was salad bar adequate

Waiting time to pay bill

6. Counter service;

Cleanliness of counter

Variety of menu, choice

Waiting time to have order taken

Waiting time to have order filled

Waiting time to have order served

Attitude of counter person

Courtesy of counter person

Is check correct

Quality of food

Cleanliness of dishes

Waiting time to pay bill

SAMPLE GUEST COMMENT CARD 1

DEAR GUEST:

Thank you for staying at a Holiday Inn hotel. We want you to feel welcome and comfortable.

Should you encounter a problem during your stay, or if the hotel staff can be of service to you, please contact the manager who is on duty.

Also, your opinions are especially helpful in making sure everything in this Holiday Inn measures up to your standards.

So, we hope you will take the time to complete and detach The Holiday Inn Report Card. Just drop it in the mail and tell us how we're pleasing you.

Sincerely,

J. Schorr

JAMES L. SCHORR
President, Hotel Group
Holiday Inns, Inc.

Holiday Inn

BSA

2392 HOLIDAY INN REPORT CARD 4473

	EXCELLENT				BAD	
1. Overall how would you grade this Holiday Inn?	A	B	C	D	F	
Now please grade:						
2. YOUR ROOM:						
Appearance	A	B	C	D	F	
Cleanliness	A	B	C	D	F	
Comfort	A	B	C	D	F	
Furnishings	A	B	C	D	F	
Bathroom	A	B	C	D	F	
3. RESTAURANT:						
Food Quality	A	B	C	D	F	
Service Quality	A	B	C	D	F	
4. PRICE/VALUE:	EXCELLENT VALUE				BAD VALUE	
Of your Room	A	B	C	D	F	
In the Restaurant	A	B	C	D	F	
5. FRONT DESK PEOPLE:	EXCELLENT				BAD	
Friendliness	A	B	C	D	F	
Efficiency	A	B	C	D	F	
6. SERVICES:						
(Messages, Wake-Up Calls, Bellman, etc.)	A	B	C	D	F	
7. OTHER FACILITIES:						
(Pool, Lounge, Lobby Parking, etc.)	A	B	C	D	F	
8. If you were to return to this area, would you stay at this Holiday Inn or look elsewhere?	Stay here <input type="checkbox"/>				Look elsewhere <input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Number of people staying in room	One <input type="checkbox"/>				Two <input type="checkbox"/>	
					More than two <input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Have you stayed at this Holiday Inn before?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>				No <input type="checkbox"/>	

Comments _____

Today's Date _____ Room # _____

Your Name/Address _____
(Please)

Location of Inn BELOIT, WI 4473

Reproduced by permission of Holiday Inns, Memphis, Tennessee.

SAMPLE GUEST COMMENT CARD 2

Bethesda Marriott Hotel

On The

1. How would you rate our hotel on an overall basis?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Average ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

2. Was your room reservation in order at check-in?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. How would you rate the following?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Check-in speed/efficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cleanliness of room on first entering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cleanliness and servicing of your room during stay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decor of your room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check-out speed/efficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value of room for price paid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Was everything in working order in your room?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you checked NO, would you please tell us what was not in working order?

☐ Room air conditioning
☐ Room heating
☐ Bathroom plumbing
☐ Television
☐ Light bulbs
☐ Other _____

5. How would you rate the following in terms of their friendly and efficient services?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Reservation staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Front desk clerk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bell staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housekeeping staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telephone operators	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gift shop staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engineering staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Front desk cashier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If any members of our staff were especially helpful, please let us know who they are and how they were helpful so that we can show them our appreciation.

Name _____

Position/Comments _____

6. Please rate the following which you have used on this visit.

A. Restaurant

Please indicate name of restaurant _____

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
<input type="checkbox"/> Breakfast <input type="checkbox"/> Lunch <input type="checkbox"/> Dinner					
Were you seated promptly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was your order taken promptly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was your food served promptly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friendly service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Menu variety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value for price paid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. Room Service

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Prompt service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friendly service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Menu variety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value for price paid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

C. Cocktail Lounge

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Prompt service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friendly service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of drinks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value for price paid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

D. Banquet/Convention Event

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Prompt service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friendly service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Did you use The Marriott MOK Line to register any dissatisfaction with our hotel?

☐ No
☐ Yes Problem was resolved
☐ Yes But problem was not resolved

Please explain any problems which remain unresolved.

8. What was the primary purpose of your visit?

☐ Pleasure
☐ Convention/group meeting/banquet
☐ Business (other than above)

9. Have you stayed at this hotel previously?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. If in the area again, would you return to this Marriott?

☐ Yes ☐ No

PLEASE PRINT THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

Departure date _____

Length of stay _____ days Room number _____

☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Ms

Name _____

Home address _____

Company or organization _____

Business address _____

Zip _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR RESPONSE
 YOUR EVALUATION WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Welcome to our hotel. We are pleased to have you stay with us.

It's very important to us that we do things right for you. That means ...

- Reservations should be easy to make
- Quick, hassle-free check-ins
- Rooms that are pleasant, immaculate
- Restaurants so good that many times they're local favorites
- A staff brimming with vitality — and smiles
- Expertise in handling meetings
- Fast, painless check-outs

You're the one who can tell us whether we have been successful or not. We value your comments and want to hear about the things we do right and the things we need to improve.

Will you let me know?

I have it made sure we do things right. After all, it's my name over the door.

Name Illegible

President, Marriott Corp.

Appendix B

Dining Room Service Rules and Etiquette

Busboys, waitresses and waiters are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times while on duty. Their awareness of their importance in the overall success of the House, both present and future, is necessary to ensure that success.

The primary duties of the busboys during the service of the meal are as follows: Filling and replenishing water glasses. Keeping tables supplied with clean ashtrays. Clearing soiled dishes from the tables after each course. Removing soiled dishes and flatware to the kitchen. Resetting tables. Keeping sideboards supplied with iced water, hot coffee and clean supplies. Rendering assistance to guests and staff when needed.

The Service of Dinner

Prior to the seating of guests, it is essential that their dining area be prepared to receive them. The floor should be free of debris; table tops clean and tables levelled; chair seats free of crumbs; all glassware, dishes and flatware clean and buffed; covers completed and set as prescribed by the House. Candles should be lit and menus in place.

1. The server should greet the guests as soon as possible after they are seated and inquire if they wish to order cocktails before dinner. If cocktails are not desired the wine list should then be offered. Iced water should be poured, and rolls and butter served.
2. If wine is ordered, it should be brought to the table and presented to the host. The server should then inquire as to when the wine is to be poured. Follow procedure of service as prescribed by the House.
3. Before the dinner order is taken, the guests should be advised of items, such as appetizers, not shown on the menu. It is essential that the server has up-to-date knowledge of the menu, so that she/he is able to translate culinary terms and basic preparation of all items.
4. When taking the dinner order, the server should have eye contact with each guest as the order is given and question any request or inquiry not fully understood.
5. When the dinner order is complete, remove the menu from the table. Offer the wine list if it has not already been requested.
6. If guests decline to order wine with dinner, remove wine glasses from the table and ask if another round of cocktails is needed before dinner service begins.
7. Place dinner order in the kitchen. Relay any special requests to the Chef at this time. Make legible notations on the order slip for side dishes, sauces, substitutions, etc.

8. Appetizer to be served
9. From this point on, the routine service of removing soiled bar glasses, replenishing rolls, iced water and clean ashtrays should be performed after a course is cleared and before the next course is served. Such consideration allows the guests to enjoy each course without service interruptions. The servers and busboys should pay particular attention to clearing the soiled dishes and ensure that all guests at the table have finished their course before any clearing begins.
10. Appetizer plates and soiled flatware to be removed.
11. Soup course to be served
12. Soup dishes and place plates to be removed.
13. Before serving the salad course, replenish any flatware needed.
14. Salad to be served.
15. Salad plates and soiled flatware to be removed.
16. Reset cover for main course with dinner fork, dinner knife or steak knife if needed.
17. If wine has been ordered to be served with the main course proceed with wine service at this time.
18. Pick up main course in kitchen. Be sure that any special requests have been filled by the Chef. All plates to be properly garnished. Sauces omitted, or served in a side dish. All plates to be covered as they are trayed. Trays not to be overloaded. Request assistance from busboy if needed.

19. Main course to be served. Offer a word of caution to guests if serving plates are too hot.
20. Allow a minute or two before asking guests, "Is your dinner to your liking?" A negative response should be attended to immediately. An apology is made to the guest and the plate removed to the kitchen for correction by the Chef. Wait in the kitchen until the food is ready to be returned to the table.
21. Wine glasses to be topped up during the main course.
22. Main course dishes and flatware to be removed.
23. If the salad course has been requested for service after the main course, leave butter knife and plate, with butter dish, on the table. Reset cover with salad fork and dinner knife. Offer fresh rolls if needed.
24. Salad to be served.
25. Salad plates and soiled flatware to be removed. Remove butter plates and butter dish.
26. Pepper mills and salts to be removed from table, table top to be crumbed. If wine service is completed, empty glasses and bottles should be removed from the table at this time.
27. Inform guest of dessert items that are available for the day and take order for desserts and beverages.
28. Reset covers with flatware for the dessert and beverage service. Cream and sugar to be on the table before service begins.
29. Dessert course to be served.

30. Beverages to be served.
31. Dessert dishes to be removed.
32. Server to ask if after-dinner drinks are desired.
33. After-dinner drinks served.
34. Coffee cups refilled.
35. Check to be presented upon request. Any cash change to be returned to the host on a side plate.
36. Server to thank guests for their kindness as they leave.
37. Table tops, chairs and floor areas to be check for forgotten articles.
38. Table cleared and reset if needed.

Standards for Floor Personnel

1. Check candleholders to make sure they are free of candle drippings from prior use.
2. Salt shakers, pepper mills, oil and vinegar cruets must be cleaned before and after each use. Check for chips/function and repair or replace as needed.
3. Pewter plates must be polished on a regular basis (first of the month)?
4. Uniforms: must be well maintained and professional. Staff hygiene, personal grooming and use of cosmetics should be impeccable. Women must wear shoulder length hair pulled up and off collar (pony tails for men); no pendant earrings; minimum jewelry; no bright nailpolish. Men should pay particular

attention to hands (immaculate); properly polished shoes; be freshly shaved; no sneakers of any kind; no casual trousers; no earrings (for men).

5. Menu knowledge: staff should be:
 - a. completely familiar with all items (both preparation techniques and ingredients).
 - b. knowledgeable about the wine list and a matching wine.
 - c. familiar with chef's culinary strengths and background.
 - d. comfortable in correct procedure for decanting wine.
6. Technical service of food.
 - a. all courses arrive at the same time and dishes are removed at the same time.
 - b. Guest course sequence remains constant throughout the meal. Everything takes place from the right side of the guest or the food is from the left (when safe to do so). All other activity comes from the right.
 - c. Service staff should be proficient with the use of service spoon and fork.
 - d. Review American, French and Russian service.
 - e. Silver is set immediately prior to each course; no service utensil or condiment is on the table unless it is integral to the current or upcoming course.
 - f. Tables are crumbed as appropriate.

- g. Plate covers are removed simultaneously and garnishes are placed away from the guest at the top of the plate.
 - h. Guest is never expected to pour his/her own beverage.
 - i. Empty glasses are immediately expected to pour his/her own beverage.
 - j. Beverages are always presented on tray.
 - k. Present impeccable checks in new (Amex) leather holders.
-
- 7. Staff are never in a "leisure mode" while in public. This applies to all staff.
 - 8. NO TRAY JACKS ARE TO BE IN EVIDENCE IN THE DINING ROOMS UNTIL FIRST MEALS ARE SERVED.
 - 9. Remember the impact of the courteous gestures: staff assisting with doors, parcels, coats, chairs, etc.

Appendix C

XXXXXXXXX RESTAURANTS

"Mystery Diner"

Evaluation Sheet

Name of property evaluated:

Waitperson's name:

Were reservations made?

what time?:

in party:

I. Outside Aesthetics of Restaurant (5 pts. total) SCORE:

A. Parking lot

1. well-lit
2. easily accessible
3. plenty of parking space

if applicable:

4. plowed
 5. valet parking
- was valet:
- well-groomed
 - courteous
 - professional
 - in uniform
 - did he/she deliver prompt service

Comments:

B. Walkways/stairs

1. shovelled
2. ice-free
3. sturdy/safe

Comments:

C. Grounds/landscaping

1. bushes and trees well-groomed
2. litter-free
3. well-lit
4. restaurant name/marquise easily visible

Comments:

D. Building

1. well maintained (i.e. no chipped paint, broken light fixtures, clean, etc.....)
2. handi-cap accessible
3. attractive/welcoming

Comments:

II. Aesthetics Inside the Restaurant: (5 pts.) SCORE:

A. General Maintenance of the Rooms & Furniture

1. carpets vacuumed/floors clean
2. worn spots on the floor/carpet
3. windows/mirrors clean
4. no obvious dust accumulation
5. furniture and light fixtures in good repair
6. clean/well-kept walls and ceiling (i.e. no paint chipping, wall-paper peeling, discolored patches)

Comments:

B. Restrooms

1. clean sinks
2. clean stalls
3. sink/vanities free of paper towels and other trash
4. no "offensive" odor
5. paper towels available or hand dryers in working order
6. soap dispensers filled
7. no debris on the floor
8. toilet paper dispensers filled
9. toilets clean and in working order
10. overall, clean and neat

Comments:

III. Reservations - if made (5 pts.) SCORE:

- A. Person answering the phone was friendly, polite, helpful, & professional.
- B. Took all pertinent information (name, phone number, date, # in party, time).
- C. Person answering clearly identified him/herself and the name of the restaurant.
- D. My request was accommodated

Comments:

IV. Host/Hostess (5 pts.) SCORE:

- A. Greeting
 - 1. How long did it take for them to acknowledge my presence?
 - 2. Was it professional and welcoming?
- B. How long did it take to get seated?
- C. Neatly groomed and dressed appropriately?
- D. Friendly, polite, hospitable
- E. Did he/she offer to take outerwear (if there was a coat check, was the person servicing it polite, friendly, & dressed appropriately)

Comments:

V. Bar/lounge Area (if applicable) (15 pts.) SCORE:

- A. Atmosphere
 - 1. Comfortable temperature
 - 2. Lighting
 - 3. Music/entertainment
 - 4. Smoke level (smoking/non-smoking)
 - 5. Bar area clutter-free (i.e. no dirty glasses/cocktail napkins, over-flowing ash-trays, etc.....) and clean.
 - 6. Tables and chairs clean and free of crumbs, dirty glasses and ashtrays, etc.....

Comments:

- B. Service
 - 1. Cocktail server/bartender well-groomed and in proper attire
 - 2. Greeting by server/bartender
 - 3. Server hospitable, accommodating, professional, friendly, courteous
 - 4. Knowledgeable about specials, and drink selections/compositions
 - 5. How long did it take for server/bartender to approach me
 - 6. How long did it take for the cocktails to be served, after the order was placed
 - 7. Did server check back at appropriate intervals
 - 8. Did server/bartender offer to add the cocktails to dinner check
 - 9. Was the drink order taken properly

Comments:

- C. Quality and Cost/Value
 - 1. Did the cocktail taste good?

2. Was it made to my specifications?
3. Do I feel the cocktail was worth the price I paid for it?
4. I ordered:

Comments:

VI. Dining Room

A. Atmosphere (3 pts.) SCORE:

1. lighting
2. comfortable temperature
3. music
4. decor
5. tables and chairs clear of food and dirty place settings
6. tray stands clear of soiled china/glassware
7. smoke level (smoking/non-smoking)
8. chairs comfortable

Comments:

B. Place Setting (7 pts.) SCORE:

1. flatware/silverware
 - a. spot-free
 - b. free of food
 - c. polished
 - d. not bent/disfigured
 - e. setting complete (no missing fork, spoon, etc....)

Comments:

2. glassware
 - a. spot-free
 - b. soil-free (no food, lipstick, or other specs)
 - c. no soap residue
 - d. no chips/cracks
 - e. appropriate

Comments:

3. china (includes anything that food is served in/on)
 - a. spot-free
 - b. free of food and stains

- c. no scratches or wearing of designs/emblems
- d. proper temperature (warm for hot foods and cold for cold foods)
- e. appropriate/conducive to menu items that are served on them

Comments:

- 4. linens
 - a. tablecloth/placemats/napkins fresh, clean, free of food, spots, and burn marks
 - b. napkins neatly folded
 - c. napkin fold functional and attractive
 - d. wrinkle-free

Comments:

- 5. misc.
 - a. salt and pepper shakers clean
 - b. flowers - fresh and attractive
 - c. candles - fresh looking
 - d. tent cards new
 - e. other

Comments:

C. Menu (5 pts.) SCORE:

- 1. adequate selection to choose from
- 2. good variety of foods
- 3. food item descriptions
- 4. food item names
- 5. print clarity and size
- 6. actual size/shape/colors/blocking format of the menu
- 7. overall readability and understandability
- 8. effective use of a marketing/sales tool
- 9. wine list
 - a. adequate selection to choose from
 - b. good variety
 - c. well organized
 - d. understandable to wine connoisseur and layman

Comments:

D. Service (25 pts.) SCORE:

1. waitperson neatly groomed and wearing proper attire
2. friendly, courteous, professional, hospitable, and accommodating
3. length of time it took for waitperson to greet me, once I was seated
4. waitperson knowledgeable about menu, menu items' ingredients, and methods of preparation
5. explained specials well and accurately
6. informed me of any changes/exclusions from the menu before leaving me to make my menu selections
7. checked back at appropriate/comfortable intervals
8. proper service "mechanics"
 - a. served foods and beverages from the correct side
 - b. cleared from the correct side
 - c. crumbed table, if needed
 - d. refilled water glasses
 - e. supplied proper eating utensils before or when the menu item was served
 - f. exercised overall good judgement in terms of guest safety and comfort
9. pace of service (too fast, comfortable, too slow)
10. how long did it take food to be served after it was ordered
11. was the check presented promptly, after being requested
12. wine service
 - a. was it performed by a wine steward?
 - b. if so, was he/she approachable, friendly, polite, knowledgeable, and helpful
 - c. were the "mechanics" performed properly
 - presentation
 - corkage
 - decanting
 - pouring
13. did the waitperson use any suggestive selling techniques?
14. what type of questions did the server ask to ascertain how the food was being enjoyed?
 - a. close-ended (vague)
 - b. open-ended (specific)
15. Did a manager and/or owner visit the table to greet me or inquire about my dining experience?

Comments:

E. Food (25 pts.) SCORE

Each course will be evaluated by taste appearance, plate presentation, "truth-in-menu", texture, consistency, quality of food products used, garnish, portion size, preparation/cooking (proper degree of doneness, proper filleting techniques, etc....), and overall quality and value for the price.

APPETIZER:

SOUP:

SALAD:

ENTREE:

DESSERT:

Comments on the entire dinner:

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

1. Do I feel that I received a good value, overall, for the dining experience in relation to the price charged?

2. WERE MY EXPECTATIONS MET?

TOTAL SCORE:
(out of a possible 100 points)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albrecht, Karl., (1988) At America's Service: How Corporations Can Revolutionize The Way They Treat Their Customers. Homewood, IL: Dow Jones Irwin.
- Albrecht, Karl., Bradford, Lawrence J., (1990) The Service Advantage: How to Identify and Fulfill Customer Needs. Homewood, IL: Dow Jones-Irwin.
- Albrecht, Karl., (1992) The Only Thing That Matters: Bringing the Power of the Customer into the Center of Your Business. New York: Harper Business.
- Auty, Susan., (1992) "Consumer Choice and Segmentation in the Restaurant Industry", The Service Journal. (July) Vol. 12 N2 pp. 324-339.
- Barbee, Cliff., Bott, Valerie., (1991) "Customer Treatment as a Mirror of Employee Treatment", S.A.M. Advanced Management Journal, (Spring) V56 N2 pp. 27-32.
- Barsky, Jonathan D., (1992) "Customer Satisfaction is the Hotel Industry: Meaning and Measurement", Hospitality Research Journal. Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 51-73.
- Berry, Leonard L., Parasuraman A., (1991) Marketing Services: Competing through Quality. New York: The Free Press.
- Bernstein, Lois., Harris, Jeanne., Meloz, Robert., (1989) "Focus Groups Improve Billing Practices, Patient Relations", Healthcare Financial Management. (May 01) V 43, N.5, pp. 57-60.
- Carlzon, Jan., (1987) Moments of Truth: New Strategies for Today's Customer-Driven Economy. New York: Ballinger Publishing Co.
- Ciampa, Dan., (1992) Total Quality: A User's Guide for Implementation. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc.
- Davis, Tim R.V., Patrick, Michael S., (1993) "Benchmarking at the Sun Health Alliance", Planning Review. (January 01) V2 N1 p. 37.
- Evans, Michael R., Chon, ye-Sung., "Formulating and Evaluating Tourism Policy Using Importance-Performance Analysis", Hospitality Education and Research Journal. pp. 203-213.

- Greenbaum, Thomas L., (1993) The Handbook for Focus Group Research. Riverside and Expanded Edition, New York, NY: Lexington Books.
- Greenwood, Frank., (1992) "Continuous Improvements to Meet Customer Expectations", (February 01) V43 N2 pp. 13-15.
- Heskett, James L., Sasser, W. Earl Jr., Hart, Christopher W.L., (1990) Service Breakthroughs: Changing the Rules of the Game. New York: The Free Press.
- Heymann, Mark S., (1990-91) "Quality Assurance in the Service Hospitality Industry - The Missing Link", National Productivity Review. (Winter) V10 N1 pp. 1-4.
- Hwang, Suein L., (1993) "A Rating Plan For Restaurants Stirs Up Trouble", Wall Street Journal. (May 26) B1 Col. 3, B8 Col. 2.
- Knutson, Bonnie., Stevens, Pete., Patton, Mark., Thompson, Colleen., (1992) "Consumers Expectations for Service Quality in Economy, Mid-Price And Luxury Hotels", Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing. V1 N2 pp. 27-43.
- Lerner, Jane., (1991) "Measuring Employee Behavior", United States Banker. (March 01) V101 N3.
- Marcos, Sharon Hearne., Tak, Jimmee., Gregorie, Mary B., (1992) "Customer Perceptions of Drive - Thru Service", Florida International University Review. (Fall). pp. 17-23.
- Myers, James H., (1991) "Measuring Customer Satisfaction: Is Meeting Expectations Enough?", Marketing Research. (December) pp. 35-43.
- Parasuraman, A., Berry, Leonard L., Zeithaml, Valerie A., (1991) "Understanding Customer Expectations of Service", Sloan Management Review. (Spring) V32 N3 pp. 39-48.
- Ransley, Derek L., (1993) "Training Managers to Benchmark", Planning Review. (January 01) V2 N1 pp. 32-36.
- Rategan, Cathie., (1992) "Total Quality Management". Journal of Property Management. (September 01), V57 N5 pp. 32-34.
- Reilly, Louann K., (1992) "Benchmarking: An Analytic Approach for Improving Service Quality", New England Journal of Human Services. VXI N1 pp. 30-35.

- Richardson, Helen L., (1992) "Do You Know What Your Customers Want?", Transportation and Distribution. (September 01) V33 N9 pp. 40.
- Rosander, A.C., (1985) Applications of Quality Control in the Service Industries. New York: ASQC Quality Press - Milwaukee Marcel Dekker, Inc. pp. 117-125.
- Senge, Peter M., (1990) The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization. New York: Doubleday.
- Singh, Jadip., (1991) "Understanding the Structure of Consumers' Satisfaction Evaluations of Service Delivery". Journal of Academy of Marketing Science. (Summer) V19 N3 pp. 223-244.
- Teixeira, Diogo and Ziskin, Joseph., (1993) "Achieving Quality with Customer in Mind", The Bankers Magazine. (January 01) V 176 N1 pp. 29-35.
- Vazieri, H. Kevin., (1993) "Questions to Answer Before Benchmarking", Planning Review. (January 01) V2 N1 p. 28-31 & 56.
- Wallington, Thomas., (1986) Richardson's Canal House Policies & Procedures Booklet.
- Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary. (1984). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Weiss, Neil A., (1989) Elementary Statistics. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Zeithaml, Valarie., Parasuraman, A., and Berry, Leonard., (1990). Delivering Service Quality: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations. The Free Press, NY.
- Zeithaml, Valarie A., Berry, Leonard L., Parasuraman, A., "The Nature and Determinants of Customer Expectations of Service", Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science. (Winter) V21 N1 pp. 1-12.